

Eastside Corridor

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

SUMMARY REPORT



Washington State
Department of Transportation



for more info...



visit www.eastsidecorridor.org
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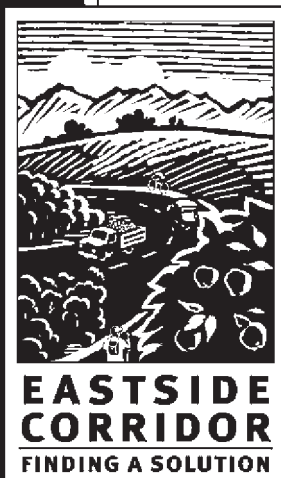
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Eastside Corridor

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The Workshop

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) hosted a stakeholder workshop on May 16, 2001 at the Red Lion Hotel in Wenatchee. The purpose of the workshop was twofold: to present accurate information about the project and also to brainstorm options that are viable and acceptable to the community. The workshop provided a unique opportunity for a group of approximately forty stakeholders to work together to identify potential solutions to the safety and mobility issues in the Eastside Corridor. Participants included residents, property owners, orchardists, citizen groups, local government agencies, tribes, and business owners.

The day began with a presentation providing a complete overview of the project history and scope of work. A series of panel presentations followed, allowing stakeholders to learn about the various points of view held by their fellow community members on this issue. Panel speakers included representatives from regulatory and planning agencies, tribes, local community organizations, and business, agricultural and recreational interests.

In the afternoon session, participants formed five small working groups. Each team was assisted by a technical lead and a facilitator. Teams began by taking part in a mapping exercise, during which they identified community assets, key destinations, and locations of traffic bottlenecks in the corridor. The groups then developed rating criteria, brainstormed potential alternatives, and evaluated alternatives by their criteria.

Late in the afternoon, the groups reconvened in order to present their findings to their peers. Interested community members and elected officials who did not participate in the workshop were invited to attend this portion in order to listen to the results of the working groups. Overall, the workshop provided the project team with valuable information. While each of the five breakout groups came up with different solutions, together they clarified specific right of way, traffic, safety, and freight mobility information that needs to be gathered in order to determine the best possible route that will enhance safety and increase mobility in the Eastside Corridor.

The Project

THE PROJECT

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is interested in finding a solution to the current safety and traffic congestion issues on State Route 28 (SR-28), also known as Sunset Highway. As it is one of the State's key freight corridors, the traffic congestion and safety hazards apparent on Sunset Highway present serious challenges to the quality of life and economic vitality of the community and region.

While the problem area that prompted the study is SR-28 between the Odabashian Bridge to the north and the Ninth Street intersection to the south, the area east of the Columbia River between Rock Island Dam and Rocky Reach Dam is being examined in order to find a solution that reflects community interests and values.

The first step toward finding a solution is to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS is a detailed study which: describes the environment potentially impacted by a project, analyzes the significant environmental impacts of the proposed alternatives, identifies unavoidable adverse environmental impacts, if any occur, and finally recommends measures to minimize significant environmental impacts. The end result of the EIS process is the identification of a preferred alternative that complies with all Federal and State environmental laws.



HISTORY OF THE CORRIDOR

In the 1950's, the Washington State Department of Transportation obtained right-of-way and access control for a transportation corridor along the Columbia River between Baker Flats on the north and 9th Street in East Wenatchee on the South. An EIS was first prepared in the 1980s, which resulted in the selection of a riverfront highway as a preferred alignment, to be constructed in the right-of way owned by WSDOT. A successful challenge of the permits issued for construction of the riverfront highway effectively prevented the project from moving forward.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS

The Eastside Corridor effort is a new round of work that will result in the selection of an alternative that will successfully reduce conflicts between regional and local traffic in the area, make the area safer for pedestrians and drivers alike, and protect the natural resources of the Wenatchee Valley.

The project will follow the environmental process mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Public scoping will occur during the summer, with meetings taking place in June and August 2001. The goal of the scoping process is to identify areas of concern, opportunities and stakeholder interests. It is an opportunity for the public to learn about the alternatives under consideration and to give feedback to the project team.

A preliminary screening process of alternatives will follow, which considers both technical and social factors. The most promising alternatives will be carried forward for environmental analysis and engineering design. The next step is the publication of the Draft EIS (DEIS), which will be presented to the public for comment in spring of 2002. The end result of the Eastside Corridor EIS process is the selection of a preferred alternative and completion of preliminary design to the 30% level, which allow for the development of final contract documents and construction of the proposed improvements.

TRAFFIC STUDY

An origin/destination study is being completed as part of the Eastside Corridor effort in order to better understand the traffic needs of the Greater Wenatchee area. The study is comprised of three components, a mail survey, harvest survey, and license plate survey. Traffic counts and land use information will be added to the origin/destination study data to develop a computerized model that will test the alignment alternatives being developed to find a solution to the safety and congestion issues in the Eastside Corridor.

ENGINEERING EVALUATION

An engineering evaluation will be completed on the most promising alternatives. Geometrics (grades, lane widths, sight distances) and structural requirements (retaining walls, bridges, channels) will be determined. Impacts to utilities and storm drainage must be minimized. Right-of-way acquisition will be considered as well, with the goal of minimizing the impacts associated with acquisition. Finally, cost estimates will be completed with gross calculations on soil removal and additions, in addition to pavement and drainage requirements.

UPCOMING REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

June 28, 2001	Scoping Meeting on Alternatives
August 2001	Open House
Spring 2002	Draft EIS published, available for comment
June 2002	DEIS Public Hearing
Fall 2002	Final EIS published

THE END RESULT

The end result of the entire Eastside Corridor project is a solution that addresses the purpose and need of the project, which is to develop a transportation solution that responds to the congestion and safety issues apparent on the Sunset Highway corridor. Social and financial impacts must be minimized, and environmental regulations must be adhered to. The Columbia River is an important resource to the community and a state river of significance, so it must not be impacted by the solution. Public opinion is important to the project team, and will help guide the process over the course of the next two years.

Panel Presentations

Safety and mobility issues in the Eastside Corridor impact the quality of life in the Wenatchee Valley. Community members have many different ideas about how to address these issues. Understanding the full range of ideas and issues is key to finding the appropriate solution. To achieve this for workshop participants, representatives from local community organizations, tribes, regulatory and planning agencies, and business, agricultural and recreational interests were invited to participate in a series of panel presentations. A summary of their presentations follows.

A G E N C Y / P L A N N I N G

Dave Honsinger

WSDOT Regional Planning Office

Coordination between the DOT, State, County and City is an important concern. Since the advent of the Growth Management Act in 1990, regional planning, land growth development, and transportation planning decisions have been influenced by the various government agencies. WSDOT is working to ensure that it is coordinating its efforts to address safety, mobility, and economic development issues in the Eastside Corridor.

Bob Goodman

Street Maintenance Supervisor, City of East Wenatchee

The top priority of the City and County is to promote economic development by developing dependable and safe access to the central business district, as it is a key revenue source providing for the City's infrastructure needs. Pedestrian and bicycle access to trails and parks must be maintained in order to preserve recreational amenities. Finally, the feasibility and impacts of waterfront development must be fully explored before such development is allowed.

Peter Ringsrud

Engineer, Douglas County

It is important to have a transportation system that balances both current and future land use needs with transportation needs. Maintaining the arterial function of roadways, providing safe cross connections and good access to the community are all transportation components that need to be focused upon. Limiting access and correctly spacing intersections are important ways to enhance the future corridor.

Wayne Kensler

Bureau of Indian Affairs

The BIA is just beginning to be involved with the project, and is interested in learning more about the issues.



Steve Tromly

Project Archeologist, Colville Confederated Tribes

The Colville want to be involved as the Eastside Corridor project develops in order to preserve the many cultural resources that exist in the entire area, especially along riverfront and on the bench.

Arlen Washines

Tribal Council, The Yakama Nation

The Yakama have a strong cultural history in the Wenatchee Valley and are interested in the Eastside Corridor project in order to ensure that water quality and cultural artifacts are respected and preserved during the construction period. Growth and progress must occur, but not at the expense of history. The Yakama request that they be notified in the event that cultural artifacts are found or disturbed, so that proper care can be taken to ensure their preservation.

L O C A L C O M M U N I T Y

Mark Spurgeon

Executive Director, Eastmont School District

The Eastmont School District's primary concern in Eastside Corridor project is the safety of students, as many students are bused to and from school via Sunset Highway. The school district is aware of the delays caused by school buses on Sunset Highway, and is looking for an Eastside Corridor solution that allows safe transport of students while eliminating disruptions to the traffic traveling on the highway.

Lynda Pheasant

Member, North Baker Sunset Neighbors for Responsible Transportation

The group formed in order to protect local schools and neighborhoods from the excessive through traffic on residential streets that has resulted from the growth of Fancher Heights. It is comprised of neighbors that live north of the East Wenatchee city limits on both sides of the Corridor. While free flowing traffic on major arterials is important, residential areas must be protected from developing into major arterials. A responsible second access route to Fancher Heights is a primary concern.

Craig Larsen

President, Citizen's Transportation Advocacy Group (CTAG)

Comprised of private citizens, elected officials, and business people, CTAG

advocates for improved transportation facilities in the Wenatchee Valley. CTAG is currently involved in four projects, one of which is Sunset Highway. The group will not advocate for a specific alternative, but rather, will work with the community to find the best alternative to serve its needs. Once the community has chosen a route, CTAG will build community support to make it a reality.



Don MillerPresident, Fancher Heights Owners Association

WSDOT should make consideration of a bench route a top priority. While the bench route is seen as a solution to some of the access problems associated with Fancher Heights, any bench route must circumvent the concentrated residential areas of Fancher Heights. Prompt resolution is key, as much growth is expected to occur on Fancher Heights in the upcoming years.

A G E N C Y / R E G U L A T O R Y**Greg Pratschner**United States Fish and Wildlife Service

During the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, the US Fish and Wildlife Service must be consulted concerning issues relating to plants, animals, and resident species of fish. The National Marine Fisheries Service oversees issues relating to the storm drainage process. Agency review of an EIS is a lengthy process. WSDOT should begin the review process as soon as the preferred alternative is selected in order to avoid delay.

Carrie BerryWashington Department of Ecology

The Department of Ecology will coordinate the permitting process for this project and expects to have a lot of involvement in the future. As an agency, the department will be concerned about any alternative proposed near wetlands and shorelines. Storm water runoff and air quality during construction are key concerns.

Megan HallFederal Highway Administration (FHWA)

FHWA is the lead agency for the Eastside Corridor EIS. Safety is the top priority—the selected alignment must meet current design standards. Grade is a primary concern, as SR2 is a major freight corridor in the national highway system. Numerous other factors must also be considered, such as environmental justice and impacts to cultural and historic resources. Public opinion will play an important role in the selection of a preferred alignment.

Elaine SomersEnvironmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Transportation projects are a high priority for the EPA, due to the disproportionate impacts they have on the environment. The EPA is involved in EIS review in two ways. It rates the environmental impact of the project, and also the adequacy of the EIS process itself. In short, the role of the EPA is to encourage decisions that foster productive harmony between humans and their environment, for a more sustainable outcome. Quality of life, scenic characteristics, historic values, and cultural resources should all be considered when preparing the preferred alternative.



R E C R E A T I O N A L

Brad Knutsen

President, Hotel/Motel Association

A riverfront highway will negatively impact potential development in the riverfront area, which one of the last areas with the potential to increase recreation and tourism opportunities in the Valley. The project team should consider the effect of possible future plans to construct a four-lane access from the interstate to the Valley, as it relates to the south side of the Eastside Corridor project. Currently, there are 1,100 hotel rooms available in Wenatchee. Year round activities are needed in order to support future hotel development.

Todd Smith

WSDOT Bicycle Advisory Committee

Designing creative, safe, and feasible bike lanes on the highway is an important concern. To be successful, the project must take into consideration the state goal, the services it is to provide, and how it will effect the community.

Jack Feil

Save the Riverfront Committee

The Save the Riverfront Committee was formed to protect the shoreline resource from construction of a limited access highway along the riverfront. It is important to maintain the shoreline for recreational, environmental, and aesthetic purposes. Noise, dust, and exhaust from a riverfront highway threaten to degrade the riverfront environment. Widening the existing Sunset Highway is better solution. In addition, WSDOT should make the commitment to construct an upper bench route.



B U S I N E S S / A G R I C U L T U R E

Mike Kelly

Business and Property Owner

Congestion is a problem in the Eastside Corridor. Cooperation and compromise are essential factors. It is important that this project move forward, which ultimately will benefit everyone.

Sergeant Dale Lathan

Washington State Highway Patrol

The Eastside Corridor project is important to the highway patrol from a law enforcement and public safety perspective.

Craig Larsen

Legislative Director, Wenatchee Valley Chamber of Commerce

Economic development is a primary concern, especially given the difficulties facing the agricultural industry. The business community sees future economic development occurring in Douglas County, east of the City of East Wenatchee. Congestion in the corridor must be fixed in order to support future development. Looking to the future, a bench route would support this development and at the same time provide a solution to the access problems in Fancher Heights in way that has fewer impacts on residents and the environment.

Dan Barr

Center Oak Properties/Valley Mall

The preferred alignment is the route that is nearest to Sunset Highway that improves congestion, is least disruptive, and encourages traffic flow to the central business district.



Working Teams

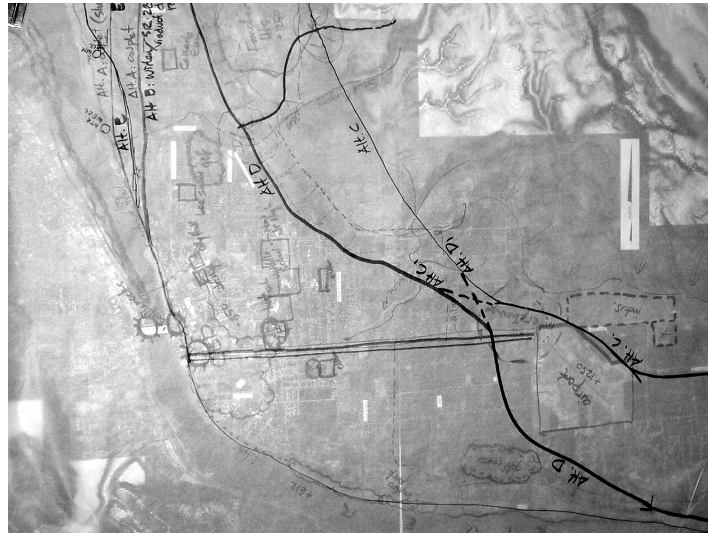
Participants broke into five small working teams of 8–10 participants each to determine potential alignment alternatives.

Team members began with a mapping exercise to familiarize each other with the study area and also to identify important community features. Using a base map of the study area, colored markers, and trace paper, participants identified community assets, locations of traffic bottlenecks and times they occur, and key destinations in the corridor.

The working teams then brainstormed potential alignment alternatives which they drew on base maps using markers and trace paper. All alignments suggested by team members were captured either in a drawing or in a written description for evaluation later in the exercise.

The next step was to brainstorm criteria by which to evaluate the potential alignments identified. The teams were given a matrix with four criteria to help get them started. Team members were encouraged to develop their own criteria to reflect their priorities. They then voted on the most important criteria for use in evaluating the alignments they brainstormed in the previous step.

The final step was to evaluate the alignments based on the priority criteria. Each team developed its own ranking system to carry out the evaluation. The alignments were tested based on the degree to which they met each of the criteria outlined by the team. The end result was the selection of the preferred alignments. These were described by a spokesperson from each team for all to hear.



ORANGE TEAM



The orange team was focused on finding a solution that serves the needs of the urban core. The team looked to in-town routes as the way to enhance safety and increase mobility along Sunset Highway.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

- Schools
- Undeveloped/underdeveloped land
- Columbia River trail
- Pangborn Airport
- Valley Mall
- Parks
- Golf Course
- Community wells
- City Hall & Library
- Regional water systems on Empire
- WG Country Club

KEY DESTINATIONS

- Valley Mall
- Costco
- Downtown core
- North Bridge
- Fire Station
- Pangborn Airport
- Hydro and Eastmont Park
- Schools
- City Hall
- Small satellite emergency services
- Fancher Heights
- Trail
- Race track
- Odabashian Bridge

BOTTLENECKS

- East interchange George Sellar Bridge: 6:30–8:00 am
- Intersection SR-28/Grant Road: 6:30–8:00 am; 3:30–6:00 pm; 11:30–1:00 pm
- Ninth/Valley Mall/SR-28: 6:30–8:00 am; 3:30–6:00 pm; 11:30–1:00 pm

PRIORITY CRITERIA

- Improve safety
- Relieve congestion
- Cost
- Provide an alternative through route
- Impact on recreational areas

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

- Social impacts
- Long-term solution
- Adhere to Growth Management Act
- Safety for students, pedestrians and bikers
- Cultural impacts
- Public opinion
- Wetland regulations
- Storm water run-off and flood control
- Construction duration
- Shoreline impacts



METHOD

Alignments were evaluated using a numeric system with a ranking of one, two, and three. A ranking of one showed the alignment met the criterion best, two signified a neutral effect, and three meant that the alignment does not meet the criteria. The two preferred alternatives scored equally well.

PREFERRED ALIGNMENTS

In-town Route

- Roadway running west of SR-28 and east of the Columbia River

Riverfront Route

- Roadway running along the Columbia River in compliance with Shoreline Act

ADDITIONAL ALIGNMENT

- Improve the existing SR-28 corridor



ORANGE TEAM

Dan Barr, Valley Mall

Carrie Berry, WA Department of Ecology

Mike Kelly, Community

Robert Larse, Citizens Transportation
Advocacy Group (CTAG)

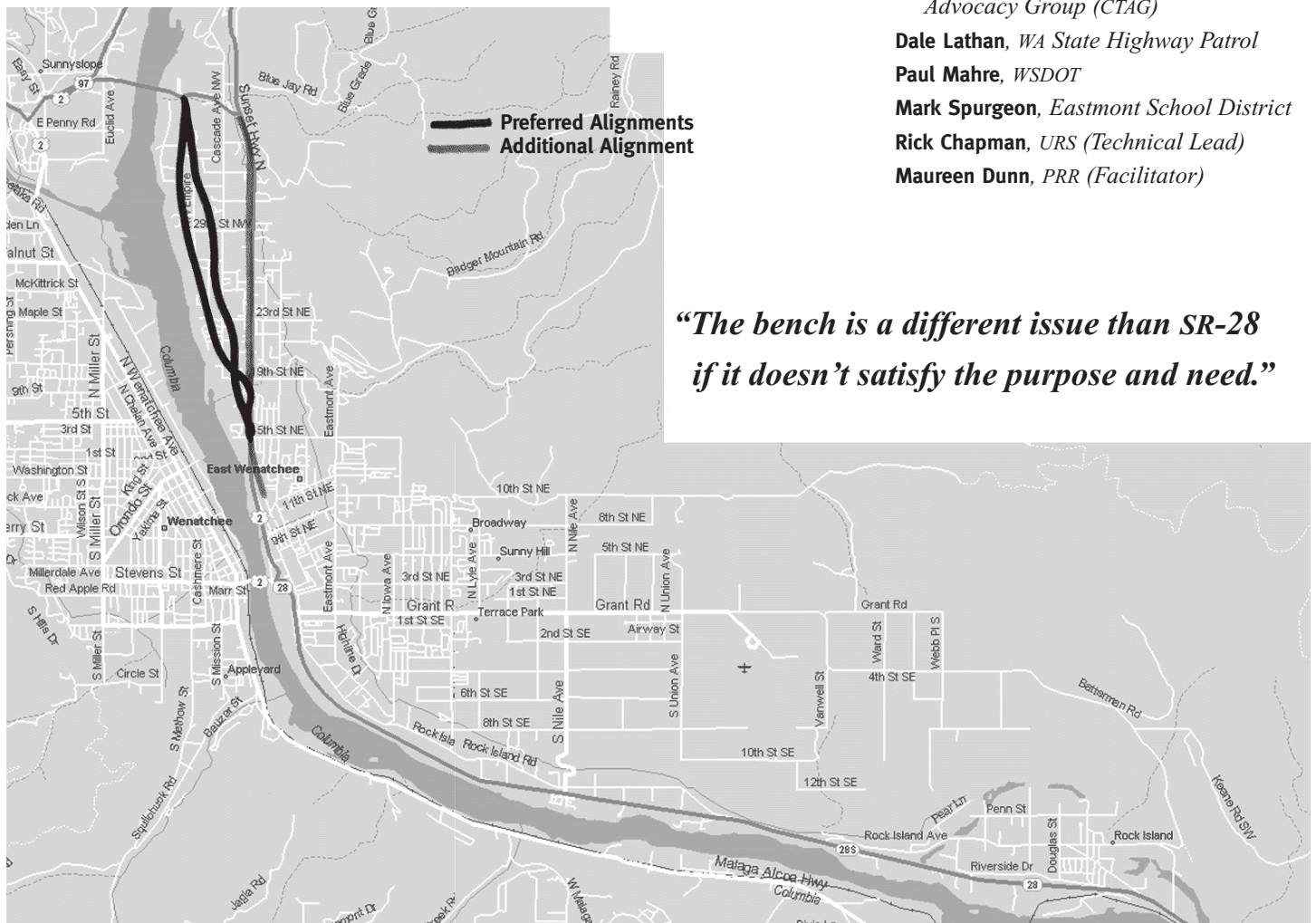
Dale Lathan, WA State Highway Patrol

Paul Mahre, WSDOT

Mark Spurgeon, Eastmont School District

Rick Chapman, URS (Technical Lead)

Maureen Dunn, PRR (Facilitator)



“The bench is a different issue than SR-28 if it doesn’t satisfy the purpose and need.”